

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR – SOURCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Organizational performance has, over time, become a fundamental objective of managerial strategies. Its achievement is conditioned by thorough scientific research concerning the context in which it is obtained as well as the analysis of the concept of Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and the way it influences different dimensions of organizational involvement, organizational climate, work satisfaction and, consequently, business results. This study has a two-part structure: the first part is a general presentation of the main theoretical concepts regarding OCB, while the second part analyzes the Organizational Citizenship Behaviour in the case of two Romanian companies activating on the tire-distribution market.

KEYWORDS: *organizational behaviour, organizational culture, work satisfaction, citizenship, work climate*

1. Significant Theoretical Approaches Regarding Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

The concept of Organizational Civic Behaviour (OCB) has been defined as the sum of all practices and gestures made by individuals with the purpose of voluntarily helping an organization, without it making any formal request for such contribution¹ (Organ, 1990). However, this definition isn't singular. Analyzing the opinions formulated in professional literature reveals two main perspectives regarding the organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB):

a) OCB as an extra-role behaviour

This perspective considers traditional approaches to individual work performance as being completely separate from OCB (Fields, 2002)². OCB is regarded as *extra-role* behaviour, unlike the concepts of work performance, which are clearly viewed as *intra-role* (since the evaluation of professional performances is made by translating the job description into a series of specific behaviours). This

¹ Organ, D.W. (1988), *Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*, „Lexington Books“, Lexington, Massachusetts.

² Fields, D.L. (2002). *Taking the measure of work: A guide to validated scales for organizational research and diagnosis*.

approach asks of a researcher who might want to measure OCB to firstly determine what behaviours fall into the categories of *intra-role* and *extra-role*, respectively. In other words, because of the fact that OCB only covers those manifestations of behaviours which exceed what is expected of an employee, which it should do in order to make correct evaluations, we should firstly know what exactly is expected of him and what is the sort of behaviour he should present during work hours. On an empirical level, of course, significant differences can exist from one workplace to another or from one organization or situation to another (Fields, 2002¹).

At first glance, this definition seems very useful, with the concept's boundaries clearly specified, making the concept operational. By using this approach, in order to measure OCB, all we have to do is determine the formal behaviour pattern prescribed by the employer and make a note of all those employee behaviours which exceed said pattern, thus falling under the OCB category. From a practical standpoint, though, this definition is quite difficult on many levels. Firstly, the definition suggests that we can't take a structural or standardized approach to measuring OCB – different situations, organizations or even different employees from the same organization start out with different sets of intra-role behaviours. As a result, a quality approach is the only conceivable one, which provides mostly irrelevant feedback for any wide diagnostic actions that might aim at insuring result generalization and comparability.

With this paradigm, the difficulty stems from the consistent applying of principles, because of the fact that the boundaries of intra-role and extra-role behaviours are not unequivocally established for all employees and are not, in fact, clearly explained in formal documents (such as the job description), which mainly presents the objectives, tasks and responsibilities of a position. In fact, most companies rarely establish clear roles in their organizational structures. Even in the most rigid of companies, team members change roles constantly and, more so than roles; an employee's actual position creates varying perceptions regarding his and his coworkers' roles. Even simple relationships, where a boss implicitly negotiates the boundaries of employee conduct, lead to continuous changes in the perception of what can be legitimately asked of someone from one week to another, or in different situations. Things get even more complicated when taking into account a superior level of informal psychological mechanism, like unshared psychological realities (for instance a psychological contract, which describes a type of reality existing solely on a perceptive level and which may not be the same for the employee and employer) or in the case of different, subjective significations conferred to certain behaviours.

b) OCB as civism

According to Fields (2001)², the second way in which OCB can be approached is based on the theoretical inheritance of political civism, which sees

¹ Fields, quote.

² Fields, quote.

civic behaviour as the sum of all those positive behaviours of individuals which turn out to be relevant to their community. This obviously leads to yet another emphasis on the situational nature of OCB – the only way we can consider a behaviour to be civic is if it's relevant to the organization. Furthermore, from this perspective, civism can only include those behaviours which require total emotional participation to the organization's goals as well as being able to identify with its set of moral values.

This way, civic behaviour can be viewed as a conglomerate which combines all types of positive behaviour conducted by employees and relevant to the organization's values and objectives. Of course, we aren't just including extra-role behaviours aligned with the organization's objectives, but also, under certain terms, a few intra-role behaviours. These are classic, normal behaviours, legitimately expected of employees and, perhaps, seen by the professional performance evaluation system as superior levels of achieving certain objectives. The manifestation of these behaviours in compliance with the values of the organization turns the situation into a civically oriented one. The paradigm also sees OCB as including political behaviours present at an organizational level, such as fully and responsibly participating to the organization's decision-making process.

According to Fields (2002), this paradigm reveals that the concept of OCB can be described on at least three development levels, generically defined as *organizational obedience*, *organizational loyalty* and *organizational participation*. The first level, generically coined as *obedience*, refers to the acceptance of necessity and desirability of rules already established by the organizational structure, by job descriptions and by the organization's policies. Certain types of personality, with a high emphasis on rules and an increased respect for norms, become more relevant with this level. Nonconformists and people with a more rebellious personality may have difficulties when trying to incorporate these kinds of organizational rigors. An individual's personality is, therefore, an important moderator of civic behaviour at this level. The level of obedience can be measured through questionnaires, by using a few items which rank the individual's respect for rules, his punctuality when it comes to the work schedule, his ability to handle deadlines, the care with which he uses resources belonging to the organization, auto control, procedure and norm acceptance, etc.

Loyalty goes beyond respecting those strict rules imposed by the organization. It appears when the employee integrates these rules and completely identifies himself with the values and vision belonging to his organization and its leaders. This type of identification doesn't exist solely on an emotional level, but it also manifests itself directly through a set of desirable behaviours.

This way, identification transcends those restricted interests of individuals, work teams or departments and leads directly to certain behaviours like defending the organization from menace, actively contributing to its reputation, cooperating with those around to serve the company's interests, which are held in higher regard than those of the employee, even in those cases where cooperation requires a

degree of interaction with less liked individuals, with competitors or even with people who might pose a personal threat. Consequently, the state of identification brings forth an emotional and moral level which is, obviously, placed above obedience and a simple behaviour in strict line with the rules.

The third level, named *organizational participation*, manifests itself when an employee shows a real interest towards the organization's 'status quo' and its relationship with the environment. This is not an extrinsic interest, stemming from just a rational analysis of efficiency, but an intrinsic one, created by the individual's value system and clearly observed in his behaviour.

We are now going to make a short presentation of the five categories of OCB while also clarifying the meaning of each one:

- *Conscientiousness* refers to the fact that the employee will successfully complete an intra-role behaviour (an individual task) by doing more than just ticking off the minimum requirements. This category includes all responsible behaviours, based on hard, honest work and, also, on the lack of any (marginally) deviant behaviour, such as absenteeism, long or very frequent breaks, disobeying certain organization rules, etc.
- *Selflessness* refers to those situations where an individual helps his coworkers whenever they are confronted with a high volume of work, or where he takes over the workload of his absent colleagues. It is generally defined, from an organizational standpoint, as the desire to help others with work-related issues, even in cases where help is not explicitly asked for.
- *Endurance* is the indication of people not complaining at work but, rather, maintaining a positive attitude towards tasks given to them and, also, towards daily problems they might face during work hours.
- *Courtesy* is an individual characteristic referring to the respect with which employees treat each other. The types of behaviour that fall under this category include caring for other people's feelings and the desire to not overexpose them to his or her worries or personal problems. The concept also includes trying to avoid creating conflicts with fellow workers, respecting other people's rights, taking care of his/her own behaviour and the way it influences the work-rate and general well-being of other employees.
- *Civic Virtue* is a sign of the fact that employees are actively and responsibly involved in the political life of the organization. There are two sides to this type of behaviour: the employee's participation and keeping informed of the organization's cares and the responsible aspect of said participation.

The constant efforts to understand the concept of OCB are not without reason. The goal of these efforts is to establish the relationship between these behaviours and the organization's business performance. Taking into account the

social change theory (Blau, 1964)¹, combining organizational citizenship behaviours can improve group performance by increasing the employees' sense of teamwork. People who help each other don't need to ask their managers for help. This leads to situations where managers have more time to deal with other, more important issues. Organizational citizenship behaviour can also influence activities between team members and groups in a positive manner (Podsakoff et al., 1997)². McNeely and Meglino (1994)³ have divided organizational citizenship behaviours in those which lead to a benefit for the individual and those which lead to a benefit for the company, where both types are linked to work satisfaction. Each type of OCB has different potential preceding events. The individual benefit has been correlated to empathy and the need to look after others, while the organizational benefit has been linked to the perception of equality at the workplace and the desire to receive recognition from coworkers. The two authors have concluded that, in the case of OCB for individual benefit, personal factors and work satisfaction are the main contributors when it comes to helping others. As far as the OCB for the organization's benefit is concerned, what comes into play is a number of organizational factors, such as the perception of equality, which leads to work satisfaction which, in turn, forms the decision to help the company. Individuals with a highly developed sense of justice in cases of rewarding other individuals have a positive level of work satisfaction, thus helping to consolidate organizational citizenship behaviours.

2. Study Case Regarding Organizational Citizenship Behaviour and the Managers' Possibilities to Capitalize on Its Conclusions

Our interest for the theoretical concept and its usefulness in an organization has determined us to launch a practical research, with two companies operating on the tire-distribution market as main subjects. The management of these two organizations has agreed that, as part of a currently ongoing organizational diagnosis process, we could get access to a sample of 32 employees from the Sales department who have completed a questionnaire regarding OCB. Invitations to complete the survey were sent to all employees, with the mention that anonymity would, naturally, be respected. The survey's rate of completion came back at 65.62%, meaning that 21 employees successfully completed the questionnaire.

The survey contained 24 items, covering the following dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviour: *selflessness*, *conscientiousness*, *endurance*, *courtesy* and *civic virtue*. The survey's answers were collected based on a 7 step

¹ Blau P., (1964), *Exchange and power in social life*, Wiley&Sons, New York.

² Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Paine, J.B., Bachrach, D.G., (2000), Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Critical Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature and Suggestions for Future Research, „Journal of Management“, nr. 26 (3).

³ McNeely B., Meglino B.,(2005), organizational citizenship behavior and social exchange: a study of the effects of sources of positive benefits, Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management, <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/....>

Likert scale, where 1 describes “strong disagreement” and 7 represents “strong agreement”.

The objective of the inquiry was to offer a clear image of the behaviours exhibited by employees working as sales agents in this particular field, with a special focus set on those behaviours towards coworkers and clients. This type of investigation favours an analysis on the positive and negative implications that these behaviours have on the employees’ psychological well-being and, also, on the organizational performance. Based on the survey’s conclusions, there are a few decisions that can be made in order to encourage different behaviours and pinpoint measures to help generate these behaviours.

The results of the inquiry can be found in the following chart:

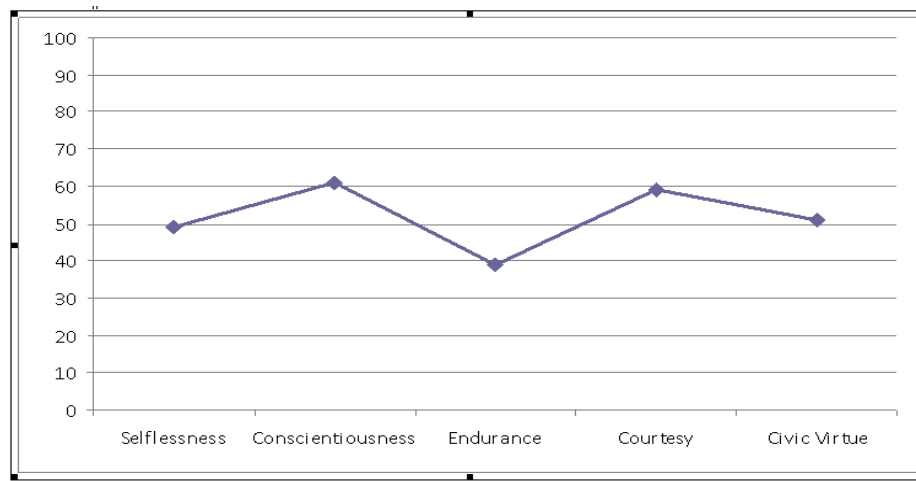


Figure 1 Results of the Application Research Regarding OCP

According to the research done on the given sample, we can point out the existence of a work climate which encourages the employees’ conscientiousness and mutual respect. Work activities are mostly individual, as team tasks tend to be less represented.

From the chart presented above we can deduct that the most important category of OCB was, in the respondents’ view, *conscientiousness*, which yielded a score of 61, with *courtesy* coming in a very close second, with a gap of just 2 points. *Civic virtue* (51) and *selflessness* (49) were deemed less valuable by the employees and *endurance* (39) was considered the least important. By making a detailed analysis of the results, we can establish:

- *Regarding selflessness*: the relatively low level of importance given to *selflessness* in the survey is related to the fact that employees have a predominantly individualistic behaviour, based on achieving individual goals and overburdening themselves with tasks, which, because of the time factor and stress levels, makes it almost impossible to help out coworkers.

- *Regarding conscientiousness*: this factor's survey result was the highest, with an overall score of 61, which means that employees pay special attention when it comes to completing individual tasks. The respondents are, typically, not satisfied with achieving the minimum requirements, but, instead, tend to put an emphasis on the quality of their work.
- *Regarding endurance*: *Endurance* yielded the lowest score in the OCB chart applied to the salesmen from the two companies. This means that employees have a predisposition for lamenting, they complain about their every day tasks and tend to focus on the problem rather than the solution. The causes for this behaviour are twofold: on the one hand it is owed to the unequal delegation of work tasks within the organization, with some employees being overloaded and feeling the pressure of keeping the same quality of work, while, on the other hand, it can be provided by the Romanian typical mentality which makes an employee feel he is overworked, regardless if this is true or false.
- *Regarding courtesy*: *Courtesy* has a good result on the OCB scale in this particular case, reaching the end value of almost 60, which means that relationships between workers are governed by respect and there's a general effort being made to avoid interfering with other people's rights.
- *Regarding civic virtue*: in the case of *civic virtue*, the end result was just above average: 51. As mentioned above, civic virtue refers to the level of responsibility felt by employees when it comes to the company's success. The result yielded by this study is indication of a good potential because, if we link it to other motivational factors as well as team targets, an increase of *civic virtue* as OCB can be encouraged.

Another aspect we kept track of during our study was trying to identify the employees' behaviour towards each other, but also towards clients. There are opinions in specialized literature which state that organizational citizenship behaviour can contribute to the clients' satisfaction (Morrison, 1995)¹. So, *conscientious* employees can exceed client expectations, *selfless* workers can help both internal and external clients, while those with a high level of *civic virtue* can make suggestions to improve the quality of work and, therefore, client satisfaction. At the same time, the employees' *endurance* and *courtesy* can provide a positive climate for the workers which is, then, transmitted to the clients.

The employees whose behaviour we have previously analyzed are conscientious, and their relatively high level of courtesy is a sign of a client relationship based on respect and admiration. The high degree of civic virtue of our

¹ Morrison, E.W. (1994). Role definitions and organizational citizenship behavior: The importance of the employee's perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37.

respondents constitutes a good premise for encouraging suggestions and improving the quality of service delivered to clients.

As for the social aspect of employee relationships, they are fairly cordial, with a formal attitude, based on mutual respect for the effort and the standard of work, rather than on the actual person. The level of selflessness is a good representation of the degree in which an employee can count on his coworkers' help when he/she is in need. For the sake of the organization's well-being, as well as the increase of intrinsic motivational factors, the two analyzed companies must encourage a higher level of selflessness. One of the measures they could take in order to increase the sense of selflessness would be to involve employees in common projects and activities or to divide tasks in a fair manner so that some of the workers don't become overburdened.

The information we have analyzed have been supplied exclusively by the 20 respondents. We feel that if all the employees had completed and handed in the questionnaire, the final scores would have registered a decrease on the OCB scale. If some of the reasons why some employees haven't filled out the survey included the lack of interest, the skepticism towards their relevance or simply their low level of commitment to their company and its values, than the results for civic virtue, endurance and selflessness would have all registered a significant decrease. If, on the other hand, the employees couldn't hand in their questionnaire due to lack of time or because of them being overworked, than the level of conscientiousness would have registered an increase, because of all the other employees' task-oriented nature.

Conclusions

All five categories of organizational citizenship behaviour obey Organ's hypothesis¹, which states that all of them, combined, lead to an increase in the organization's efficiency. The final score of this inquiry is a little above average, which means that, if the company's goal is to improve organizational performance, then a series of measures must be taken in order to insure the increase of all five factors.

Starting from Schnake's hypothesis (1991)², according to which organizational citizenship behaviour is influenced by work satisfaction and a good treatment from the supervisor, we feel that some of the rapports between managers and employees should be revised in order to encourage communication between them. At the same time, encouraging communication within departments, but also between departments could prove useful because it helps employees feel updated to changes or decisions within the organization. Also, in order to increase the level of

¹ Organ, D.W., quote

² Schnake M.E., Dumler M.P., (2003), Levels of measurement and analysis issues in organizational citizenship behaviour research, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, vol.76, Nr.3.

civic virtue, a type of democratic-advisory management might be viable, as it makes employees feel part of the decision process.

Selflessness can be encouraged by creating certain group activities, by initiating common projects and by promoting informal communication between employees.

Within the sample taken into consideration in the inquiry, we can see that the endurance category came in on last place. A low level of endurance creates a loss in motivation for employees in those highly stressful situations when the workload is increased at an abnormal rate. To modify the employees' attitude towards these moments, the employer could offer special bonuses at the end of a tough period. This way, employees would not feel so negative about those stress situations and an overtly high workload.

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